

Statement from AAUP-TNS Chapter on the Special Voluntary Separation Program (SVSP)

September 21, 2020

To the faculties of CoPA, Lang, NSSR, Parsons, and SPE, and Members of the UFS:

This communication follows from our August 23 joint statement (with the Ad Hoc X-Divisional Covid-19 Committee) on Convening the Task Force to Explore New Models for Liberal Arts at The New School. It responds to concerns expressed by faculty who have received emails sent by the Provost's Office regarding the **Special Voluntary Separation Program (SVSP)**. Currently 102 of 365 full-time faculty at TNS are eligible for the SVSP. This is a sizable portion of the academic community. If many decide to accept the terms of the program, the SVSP could have a significant impact on restructuring independent of Task Force recommendations.

The AAUP-TNS Chapter expresses strong concerns with the following:

- There is an inherent danger that the SVSP will eliminate tenure-track positions which will then be replaced by part-time or non-tenure track posts. Without a commitment from the university administration to retain these tenure-track positions, there is a reasonable implication that faculty governance and academic freedom are diminished by increasing the number of contingent and insecure faculty employment categories such as part-time or RTA.
- The SVSP does not appear to have taken into account the disproportionate distribution of eligible faculty in certain programs and departments. This negatively affects the distinction of these academic areas. The administration must guarantee a balance of academic priorities across all parts of our university.
- The SVSP has only been offered to full-time faculty. Without a comparable offer to staff, it would appear that the intention—or effective outcome—of the program is to weaken the academic core functions of the university. We call on the administration to maintain equity between all workers at The New School.
- The tone of the Provost Office's emails is misleading. They phrased the SVSP as offering "protection" in advance of impending restructuring in the fall. The implication is that this is either a veiled threat or an ultimatum.

Given the concerns outlined above, we ask that the Provost's and President's Offices communicate clearly the relationship between the cost-saving measures being undertaken through the implementation of this program and the centrality of the "long-term interests of our students and academic programs" that has been emphasised by senior administration in the most recent University Planning FAQs.

We would encourage all of the faculty councils in the different divisions, as well as the University Faculty Senate, to use this statement to hold open discussions in order to identify questions and concerns that are particular to their respective constituencies.